

## Sūrah Dahr

### Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah Qiyāmah, the previous *sūrah*. It begins with the very subject on which the previous *sūrah* had ended. If the last four verses of the previous *sūrah* and the first three of the current *sūrah* are deliberated upon, one will realize that they dovetail into one another. Such an affinity is evident in all paired-*sūrahs*. Examples can be seen in earlier surahs.

The central theme of both *sūrahs* is the same; however, the nature of arguments and methodology of discussion are different in both. In the first *sūrah*, the Day of Judgement is substantiated by the chiding soul present within man; it is explained that the obvious requirement of he being blessed with the faculties of sight and hearing and with the awareness of good and evil is that a Day of Judgement come; on this day, those who had shown gratitude to God and fulfilled the obligations of His favours be rewarded, and those who took to disbelief by not fulfilling these obligations should be punished for their blindness. If this reward or punishment does not take place, it would mean that the grateful and the ungrateful are alike in the eyes of God.

In some *maṣāḥif*, this *sūrah* is regarded to be Madīnan. However, in my opinion, not even one verse of this *sūrah* was revealed in Madīnah, what to speak of the whole *sūrah*. The real criterion to judge whether a *sūrah* is Makkan or Madīnan is its subject matter. In the forthcoming pages, an analysis of this subject matter and the *tafsīr* of its verses will show that those who have regarded it to be Madīnan have no grounds to hold this view.

### Analysis of the Discourse

**Verses (1-3):** An allusion to an obvious reality regarding the creation of man: for a certain period of time he was a non-entity. The Almighty took him out from the darkness of non-existence and granted him the light of existence. He created him from a drop of fluid, and after making this drop pass through various phases fashioned it into a being who was able to hear and understand. The Almighty then, after making him aware of both good and evil, tests him as to whether he becomes grateful or ungrateful.

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**Verses (4-22):** A mention of the natural consequence of man being blessed with the awareness of good and evil. Then briefly the grievous fate of people who do not value this blessing of the Almighty and adopt the path of disbelief is mentioned. This is followed by a mention of the great reward which people will be blessed with – people who were thankful for this blessing and spent their life keeping in view the fact that they will be held accountable for their deeds.

**Verses (23-28):** An exhortation to the Prophet (sws) to show perseverance and disregard the demands and objections of the disbelievers and the ingrates; he should repose his trust in the God who revealed the Qur'ān to him; He will help him in every difficulty. The Prophet (sws) is urged to seek patience and perseverance through the prayer and through remembering God. The real ailment of the disbelievers is that they do not have the courage to sacrifice the immediate gains of this world for the deferred benefits of the Hereafter. To conceal this ailment, they are fabricating various objections against the Hereafter even though it is absolutely clear to them that it is certain to come and the Prophet (sws) is warning them of its advent. It is not at all difficult for God to create them again just as He created them the first time.

**Verses (29-31):** A warning is sounded to the adversaries of the Prophet (sws) that the latter's responsibility is just to make people aware of this warning; it is for them to benefit from it or to reject it. Once he informs them of this warning, he will have fulfilled his responsibility. God has a definite law as per which He guides people; according to this law, only those people who pay heed to His warnings will be worthy of guidance; those who will not be worthy of it and will remain adamant in their disbelief, will become the fuel of Hell. Every act of the Almighty is governed by His knowledge and wisdom.

### Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا (١) إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ  
مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَّبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا (٢) إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا  
كَفُورًا (٣) إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلًا وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَعِيرًا (٤) إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ  
كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا (٥) عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا (٦) يُوفُونَ  
بِالتَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا (٧) وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا

وَأَسِيرًا (٨) إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا (٩) إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبَّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا (١٠) فَوَقَاهُمُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا (١١) وَجَزَاهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا (١٢) مُتَكَبِّينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا وَلَا زَمَهْرِيرًا (١٣) وَدَانِيَةً عَلَيْهِمْ ظِلَالُهَا وَذُلَّتْ قُطُوفُهَا تَذْلِيلًا (١٤) وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِآنِيَةٍ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرَ (١٥) قَوَارِيرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ قَدَّرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا (١٦) وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا (١٧) عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّى سَلْسَبِيلًا (١٨) وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُخَلَّدُونَ إِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَنْثُورًا (١٩) وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ ثَمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمُلَكًا كَبِيرًا (٢٠) عَلَيْهِمْ ثِيَابٌ سُنْدُسٌ خُضْرٌ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٌ وَحُلُّوا أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا (٢١) إِنَّ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُمْ مَشْكُورًا (٢٢) إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ تَنْزِيلًا (٢٣) فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تُطِعْ مِنْهُمْ آيِمًا أَوْ كَفُورًا (٢٤) وَادْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (٢٥) وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَاسْجُدْ لَهُ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا (٢٦) إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ يُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ وَيَذَرُونَ وَرَاءَهُمْ يَوْمًا ثَقِيلًا (٢٧) نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاهُمْ وَشَدَدْنَا أَسْرَهُمْ وَإِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَا أَمْثَلَهُمْ تَبْدِيلًا (٢٨) إِنَّ هَذِهِ تَذْكِرَةٌ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا (٢٩) وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (٣٠) يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَالظَّالِمِينَ أَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٣١)

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

Has there passed over man a period of time when he was a thing not worthy of mention? We have created man from a drop of mingled fluid. We continued to turn it over until We made him capable of hearing and seeing. We showed him the path. It is now up to him to be grateful or ungrateful. (1-3)

We have prepared for the disbelievers chains and yokes and a blazing fire. But the loyal, they indeed will drink cups of wine flavoured with camphor, a spring near which these servants of Allah will drink and take out its channels wherever they want. They used to keep their vows and remained fearful of the Day whose horror will spread far and wide, and used to give food to the poor, the orphan and the captive in spite of being in need of it; [their motivation being:] "We are feeding you for Allah only." No reward do we desire from you nor gratitude. We dread from our Lord a Day, harsh and cruel. So Allah saved them from the affliction of that Day and bestowed them with freshness and joy, and as reward for

being patient gave them Paradise and robes of silk. They will be reclining in it on thrones and will feel neither the heat of the sun nor the cold of the winters. The shades of the orchards of Paradise will bow down over them and the clusters of their fruits will be within their easy reach. And dishes of silver and goblets of crystal will be passed around them. The crystal will be of silver which they will have very aptly arranged. (4-16)

And they will be given to drink another wine flavoured with the spring of Zanjabil. This is a spring therein called Salsabil. And they will be attended by boys who will never grow old. When you see them you will think that they are pearls scattered about. Wherever you look you will see great favours and a grand kingdom. Their outer garments will be of green silk and brocade. And they will be made to wear bracelets of silver. And their Lord will give them pure wine to drink. Indeed, this is a reward of your deeds and your effort has been accepted. (17-22)

We alone have revealed this Qur'ān to you in an elaborate manner. So with perseverance wait for the judgement of your Lord and pay no heed to any sinner or ingrate among them. And remember the name of your Lord from dawn to dusk and also prostrate yourselves before Him in the night and glorify Him till late at night. (23-26)

These people only love this transient world and ignore a burdensome Day that is to come. We alone created them and strengthened their joints and whenever We intend We will replace them in exactly the same form they are in. This is a reminder. So whoever desires he should take the path of his Lord and you will not desire until God desires. Indeed, Allah is all-knowing, wise. He admits into His mercy whomever He wishes. And for the wrongdoers, He has prepared a grievous punishment. (27-31)

### Explanation

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا<sup>1</sup>

Exegetes have regarded the interrogative particle هَلْ to be synonymous to the particle قَدْ. However, I could not find any corroboration of this view in classical Arabic poetry. I have deeply deliberated upon some examples which are presented in support of this view, and in my opinion in them too the particle هَلْ is used as an interrogative. However, just as interrogative particles are used in our language in different connotations, in Arabic too, they have various connotations. It is neither possible to explain all of them

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1. Has there passed over man a period of time when he was a thing not worthy of mention?

here nor is there any such need. Some of their aspects have already been discussed in previous *sūrahs*, and some will come under discussion at appropriate places in the subsequent *sūrahs*. Here this much is needed to be kept in consideration that a subtle usage of an interrogative sentence is to make an addressee accept something which is a self-evident reality but he in spite of acknowledging this fact deviates from it in practice. He is not willing to accept it even though he regards it to be true. As an example of this style, consider this sentence which a mother says to her disobedient son: “Don’t you remember that you were put in my lap in the form of a lump of meat. I transformed my blood into milk and made you drink it and then looked after you until you became a mature human being.”

A little deliberation will show that these are not simple factual statements; they encompass a lot of meanings. For example:

-- they remind the son of one of the great obligations imposed on him which he is not fulfilling even though there is no room for denying it.

-- they are replete with various aspects of anger, reprimand, sorrow and express yearning.

-- they contain a real complaint and protest.

All these meanings emanate from this interrogative nature of the sentences. If these sentences are divested of their interrogative sense and converted into simple factual statements, then all these meanings will be stripped from them. Similar is the case with this verse. Its interrogative particle encompasses many meanings, which will become evident as the *sūrah* gradually unfolds itself. If the interrogative particle هَلْ is understood to convey the same meaning as قَدْ then this verse will become a very inappropriate prelude to the subjects which are subsequently raised in it.

A famous couplet from the *mu‘allaqah* reads:

هل غادر الشعراء من متردم  
أم هل عرفت الدار بعد التوهم

(Did the poets leave a void in poetry or did you find the clue to the place of the beloved after your inquisitiveness?)<sup>2</sup>

This is a very exquisite opening couplet and all its beauty is concealed in its interrogative nature. If the particle هَلْ is replaced with قَدْ it will divest the couplet of this beauty. The poet while addressing himself is inquiring after the driving force behind the composition of this eulogy. Was it that some void remained in poetry which he wanted to fill or was

2. ‘Antarah ibn Shaddād, *Di#wān*, vol. 1, 172.

it the fact that the remains of the beloved's house had ignited the flame of love which wanted expression. The implication is that both these reasons were present. Indeed, the poetry was inflicted with a void that needed to be filled by this eulogy and in spite of the fact that the subject of the clue to a beloved's house has been discussed in a variety of ways and moods by poets, it was still wanting and needed more expression.

Here, the objective is not to point out the beauty of this opening couplet; the only purpose is to point out the difference between styles. The word قَدْ would also have been appropriate as far as the rhyme and meter of the couplet is concerned; however, it would have been totally deprived of such depth of meaning.

The addressees of this verse are people who disbelieved the Day of Judgement and the reward and punishment which will take place therein. They are addressed by the Qur'ān and asked whether there was not a time when man was virtually a non-entity; he was a creature that roamed in water, mud and mire. Providence made this insignificant existence pass through various stages and after training and educating him made him reach a level in which he became the best of all creatures. The purpose of this question is to induce man to reflect as to why such elaborate arrangements were made by providence for him. Why was he blessed with such great abilities? Was all this done merely so that he eats, drinks and then dies? Are not some responsibilities imposed on him as a result of being blessed with such favours? Does man not owe some obligations to the Being Who created Him? These questions should arise in every person who reflects on his existence.

Man's own being is the closest to him and every part of him induces him to reflect and ponder. The interrogative nature of the verse is meant to stimulate him towards reflection: If God is beyond man's eyes, his own being is at hand; by deliberating on it he can witness God's power and providence, mercy and justice. Similarly, if he reflects he will come to realize that although he has not seen the Day of Judgement, yet his own intuition contains signs and testimonies of such a day. In fact, so blatant are these testimonies that he cannot deny them unless of course he is absolutely stubborn.

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا<sup>(٢)</sup><sup>3</sup>

In the preceding verse, attention is directed to the bleak past man has at the beginning of his life. Here in this verse various phases of his creation

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3. We have created man from a drop of mingled fluid. We continued to turn it over until We made him capable of hearing and seeing.

are alluded to, every aspect of which is before him, and which are pointing to the reality this verse is stating: man is created from a drop of a fluid; providence makes this very drop pass through various phases and stages and then fashions from it a human being who can hear, understand and use his intellect; man should reflect on this fact: how can it be difficult for the God Who has shown such superb creativity in a drop of a fluid to re-create man; he should also reflect on how the knowing and wise God Who has blessed an insignificant drop of fluid with the higher faculties of sight and hearing and also given him an awareness of good and evil would do something so meaningless as to not bring forth a Day of reward and punishment.

In the expression *مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ* the word *أَمْشَاجٍ* is the plural of *مَشْجٌ* and *مَشِيجٌ*. One of its meanings is “something which is a mixture and blend”. The word *أَمْشَاجٍ* is among those words which in spite of being plural are used as an adjective for singular entities. The fact that a fertilized sperm is a blend may refer to the fact that it consists of various components and may also refer to the fact it is a blend of the sperm and ovular cells of a man and woman respectively. It should be kept in consideration that keeping a balance between various components and conflicting natures so as to produce the right result in accordance with the required objective is not possible unless the whole process is carried out under the supervision of a wise and powerful being. A chance happening cannot produce such a process replete with wisdom and sagacity.

Generally, people have taken the word *نَبَّئْتِلِيْهِ* to refer to the cause. Its meaning in this case would be: “We have created you to test you”. However, had it been used in this causative meaning, it should have been appended with the particle of causation: *lām*. It grammatically occurs in the form of an accusative of state (*ḥāl*), which is entirely different from the meaning of causation. In my opinion too, it is an accusative of state and means: “We created man in such a manner that We after making him gradually pass through various phases perfected him into a cognizant and discerning human being.”

The word *إِتِّبَلَاءٌ* means “to test and try out something”. When a person tests a thing he surveys it from various angles turning it over from side to side. From this meaning, the sense of passing from one phase to another was incorporated into it. Here, the word is used in this very meaning. Some exegetes have also adopted this meaning.

The various phases and stages after passing which man’s creation culminated are mentioned at various places in the Qur’ān. Following are some examples:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن تُّرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِّن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّن عِلْقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّن مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَغَيْرِ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ لَّئُبَيِّنَ لَّكُمْ وَنُقَرِّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشَدَّكُمْ (٥:٢٢)

People! If you have doubts on being raised again after death, then reflect on the fact that We first created you from clay, then from a drop of water, then from a clot of blood, and then from a lump of flesh – some complete and some incomplete so that We might fully manifest to you Our power and mercy. We then make it stay in the womb as much as We want for an appointed term, and then We bring you forth as infants, then We nourish you that you reach your prime. (22:5)

In Sūrah Mu'minūn, the words are:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ مِن سَلَالَةٍ مِّن طِينٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ (٢٣: ١٢-١٤)

And We first created man from an essence of clay: Then placed him in the form of a drop of blood in a secure place. Then We fashioned this drop of water into a clot of blood, then made the clot of blood into a lump of flesh. Then We created bones in it and then clothed the bones with flesh, then brought it forth as an entirely new creation. So, blessed be God, the best of creators. (23:12-16)

The various phases of creation detailed in the above quoted verses are very concisely referred to in the verse under discussion. The word تَبْتَلِيهِ is used for this gradual passage from one phase to another. It is evident from this that the final product has to pass through many stages. At each stage, providence tried and tested it well as to whether the prescribed characteristics of each stage had appeared in it or not.

The words فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا (until We made him capable of hearing and seeing) summarize all this grand arrangement: either man was once an insignificant thing unworthy of mention in the form of water, clay, mud and clot or there came a stage when the Almighty blessed him with the high qualities of seeing and hearing; the words “then brought it forth as an entirely new creation” of Sūrah Mu'minūn (sūrah 23) quoted above refer to this second stage.

The words سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ actually symbolize all higher traits and abilities of man. It is because of these that man is able to distinguish between good



and evil and he becomes worthy of being tested by the Almighty. This test relates to whether man adopts the right path and thereby becomes a grateful person to God or deviates from it and becomes an ungrateful person who is unappreciative of the favours of God. An obvious consequence of this trial is that those who honour and value their traits and abilities should be rewarded and those who do not should be punished. If this does not happen, then what is the purpose of all these elaborate arrangements made by providence in the creation of man?

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا<sup>4</sup>

This verse mentions the consequence of granting man the faculties of hearing and sight: he was shown the right and wrong path. At another place, the words used are: (١٠:٩٠) وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ (have We not shown him both paths? (90:10)). In Sūrah Shams it is said: (٨:٩١) فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا (then [God] inspired it with its evil and its good, (81:9)). After being guided to these paths, man became a witness upon himself to good and evil and was left with no excuse to adopt the wrong path. The previous *sūrah* refers to this fact in the words: (١٥-١٤: ٧٥) وَلَوْ أَلْقَى مَعَاذِيرُهُ (in fact, he himself is a witness upon his own self however much he may put up excuses.)

The words (إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا) (it is now up to him to be grateful or ungrateful) mention man's freedom of choice: after giving man the awareness to distinguish between good and evil, the Almighty gave him the choice to adopt whichever path he wanted. If he treads the path of virtue, he will become grateful to his Lord and will be rewarded for it, and if he treads the path of vice, he will become ungrateful and will be punished for it.

إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلًا وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَعِيرًا<sup>5</sup>

This verse mentions the obvious consequence of man being blessed with the ability to distinguish between good and evil: when the Almighty has blessed man with this ability, He will definitely reward those who are grateful to Him, and will punish those who are ungrateful to Him. If this does not happen, then blessing him with this ability would be a useless act. But God is wise and it is against His wisdom for Him to do something meaningless.

The implication of the verse is that since the Almighty has blessed man

4. We showed him the path. It is now up to him to be grateful or ungrateful.

5. We have prepared for the disbelievers chains and yokes and a blazing fire.

with the awareness to distinguish between good and evil, hence the grateful and the ungrateful will not be treated equally by Him. For the latter, chains and yokes and a blazing fire is ready to greet them: their feet shall be put in chains and necks in iron yokes and they will be dragged towards Hell and cast into it.

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا (٥) عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا (٦)<sup>6</sup>

These verses mention the fate of the grateful in contrast to that of the disbelievers mentioned in the previous verse. They are called *أَبْرَارَ* (loyal). The real meaning of *بِرٍّ* is “fulfilment of promises and trusts” and the real meaning of the word *شُكْر* is to acknowledge and discharge one’s obligation towards favours received. A clear element of commonality exists between the two words. Servants of God who acknowledge their obligation towards His favours and carry it out are the ones who should be called loyal.

The word *كَأْسٍ* is used both for a drink and the cup in which it is drunk.

The word *مِزَاجٍ* means a flavour added to temper a drink. At times, in order to reduce the intensity of the taste, smell and flavour of food and drinks, certain things are added to them at the time of consumption. In classical Arabic poetry, we find mention of such substances and other similar ones being added to wine for this purpose. In Paradise, this flavour will be taken from the sweet water from the fountain of *kāfūr*.

The word *كَافُورٌ* here does not refer to camphor, its general connotation. The Qur’ān itself has clarified that it is a spring in Paradise on whose banks its dwellers will sit and drink wine. They will add the flavour of this spring’s water to the wine and make it even more tasty and flavoursome. A question may arise here on the reason for the spring being named *kāfūr*. Though such a question should generally not arise in case of names, yet the thought does cross one’s mind that there must be some relationship between the entity and its name. This relationship is of the category of the *mutashābihāt* and only those who are fortunate enough to reach Paradise and drink from this spring will get the answer to this question.

The *بِ* in the expression *يَشْرَبُ بِهَا* is an adverb of place just as it is in the Qur’ānic expressions *يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ* and *يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ*. The implication is that this fountain will be reserved for the near ones of God for their wine consumption. The word “servants of God” refer to the loyal mentioned

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6. But the loyal, they indeed will drink cups of wine flavoured with camphor, a spring near which these servants of Allah will drink and take out its channels wherever they want.

earlier. It is for them that the Almighty will make such an elaborate arrangement as to reserve a fountain for their wine consumption. It may well be kept in consideration that there is a great affinity between drinking wine and drinking it on the banks of a fountain.

The word *تَفْجِيرًا* in the expression *يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا* means to take out a lot of branches from a fountain and make a network of them. The implication is that the dwellers of Paradise will not have to travel to this fountain and any one from among them will be able to take out its branches whenever he wants to; he will be able to quench his thirst and savour his taste-buds with it without any hardship of travel.

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا<sup>7</sup>

Mentioned in this verse are the traits and deeds of these people which will entitle them to such reward.

The word *nadhr* refers to a self-promise made to do a good deed. The trait of these loyal people specially mentioned by the Qur'ān is fulfilment of promises. People who are so conscientious as to fulfil self-made promises can be expected to be even more conscientious regarding obligations imposed on them by God. Our exegetes have widened the scope of the word *nadhr* and included in it all virtuous acts whether imposed by a person on himself or by the Almighty on him.

It should be kept in consideration that *nadhr* (vow) has occupied great importance in all previous religions and it was rampant in pre-Islamic Arabia too. People who wanted to do a virtuous deed as *hajj*, *umrah*, animal sacrifice and spending in the way of God would make vows to do so and then would fulfil them with great fervour. The real reason among the Arabs for this was because they were un-lettered. They were not very conversant with religious rites, and for this reason the pious among them would fill this gap by making vows. After the advent of Islam, when all the principles and corollaries of religion became evident to them, the sphere of making vows was reduced. Vows which related to polytheistic practices were completely done away with. Others which burdened a person beyond his capacity were either prohibited or were reformed. Since this *sūrah* belongs to the period when people were yet to be informed on the details of the directives and etiquette of Islam, vows are specially and emphatically mentioned in it. Later, when all the *sharī'ah* had been revealed, the sphere of vows was reduced, as is mentioned earlier.

The word *مُسْتَطِيرٌ* means “wide-spread and all-embracing”. It refers to the

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7. They used to keep their vows and remained fearful of the Day whose horror will spread far and wide.

degree of fear such people had of the punishment of the Hereafter which would be wide-spread and all-embracing. In other words, on that day each and every person, low or high, poor or rich, ruler or ruled and even the worshippers and their deities will have to face the horrors of that day. Only those whom the Almighty will protect will be saved from it.

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا<sup>8</sup>(٨)

This is a mention of how these people deal with their fellow human beings: they fulfil the needs of the poor, orphans and the captives while disregarding their own. The word *إِطْعَامٌ* is not used in the limited sense of providing food only. It includes providing other basic necessities of life. It is used in this broad meaning in the Qur'ān.

Generally, people have regarded the antecedent of the pronoun in *عَلَى حُبِّهِ* to be God. They interpret the verse to mean that the righteous people feed the poor and the orphans because of their love for God. Although this interpretation is grammatically possible, I, in the light of parallel verses of the Qur'ān, prefer the interpretation of those who regard this antecedent to be food. Thus, as per this interpretation, the verse means that these people give preference to the need of the poor and the orphans even though they are needy themselves.

There are various reasons for preferring this view:

Firstly, the character of the loyal people of God is being portrayed and the Qur'ān says that people who are truly loyal to God are the ones who spend in the way of God what is dearest to them; it is dear to them because it is either very valuable in itself or because they badly need it. Thus the Qur'ān says: *لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ* (3:92) (you shall never be truly loyal until you spend in the way of God what you dearly cherish, (3:92)). At another place, it is said: *وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ* (9:59) (and they give preference to the poor and the indigent over themselves even though they are in need, (59:9)).

Secondly, in a succeeding verse, the reward of these loyal people is mentioned thus: *وَجَزَاهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا* (and as reward for being patient gave them Paradise and robes of silk.) A little deliberation will show that the real aspect which highlights their patience is that in spite of being needy themselves they feed and clothe the orphans and the poor. If the other interpretation is adopted, there is nothing in the verse which highlights their trait of patience even though the discourse entails it. This explanation automatically ascertains the antecedent of the pronoun in *عَلَى حُبِّهِ*.

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8. And they used to give food to the poor, the orphan and the captive in spite of being in need for it.

Thirdly, the spending in the way of God which is from one's dear and cherished wealth and is done while sacrificing one's own needs is in fact the very one meant to please God. With regard to this, the subject of God's love automatically is raised in it.

In this verse, captives are mentioned alongside the poor and the indigent keeping in view the circumstances of those times. Captives who were arrested in those times for a crime or some investigation would generally fulfil their needs by asking people. It is evident from the statements of Qādī Abū Yūsuf that this situation remained till the time of the Abbasids. In current times, the nature of the jail punishment has changed a lot and one does not need to spend on the captives the way it was once needed; however, there are still various situations in which one may need to spend on the captives and their attendants under this very head.

إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا (٩) إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبَّنَا يَوْمًا  
عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا (١٠)<sup>9</sup>

This is a mention of the inner motivation of their spending in the way of God.

The adjectives of عَبُوس and قَمْطَرِير are used to describe the Day of Judgement. The former means "something harsh and severe" and the latter actually has come to emphasize the intensity of the first. Such will be the harshness and cruelty of that day that no one will be able to help anyone. On that day, everyone will have to encounter the results of his deeds. The mercy of God will be earned by only those who, to earn His pleasure, had sympathized with the poor and the indigent and ignored their own needs to fulfil theirs.

This verse does not necessarily mean that this statement was uttered by the people who are helped by them. It is actually an expression of their inner motive behind spending for the cause of God only; they have nothing to drive them in this undertaking except the fear of the Hereafter.

فَوَقَّاهُمُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا (١١)<sup>10</sup>

This is a mention of their reward: since they remained fearful of a harsh and cruel day and spent in charity to protect themselves from the horrors

9. [their motivation being:] we are feeding you for Allah only. No reward do we desire from you nor gratitude. We dread from our Lord a Day, harsh and cruel.

10. So Allah saved them from the affliction of that Day and bestowed them with freshness and joy.

of that day, the Almighty will protect them from the afflictions of that day, and when all faces will be grim and desolate on that day, theirs will glow with freshness and joy.

وَجَزَاهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا<sup>11</sup>

The words بِمَا صَبَرُوا (for being patient) refer to the patience mentioned in the earlier verse وَيُطْعَمُونَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ (and they used to give food in spite of being in need of it). Only a person who is patient will give his food to others in spite of being inflicted with hunger himself.

They will be blessed with Paradise so that they can eat its fruit and benefit from its eternal bliss and will be blessed with silk so that they wear its robes. These favours include a place to live, food to eat and clothes to wear.

مُتَكَبِّرِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا وَلَا زَمْهَرِيرًا<sup>12</sup>

The implication of this verse is that these people will remain secure from the hardships of heat and cold and recline on thrones. Their sun will provide light and energy to them but will not produce the heat which bothers a person. In this way, the weather in Paradise will always remain salubrious, healthy and enjoyable. They will never encounter the monotony of autumn and the cold winds of winter.

وَدَانِيَةً عَلَيْهِمْ ظِلَالُهَا وَذُلِّلَتْ قُطُوفُهَا تَذْلِيلًا<sup>13</sup>

The implication of this verse is that the dwellers of Paradise will not need to make any effort to obtain its luxuries. Everything will be readily and easily accessible to them.

وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِآنِيَةٍ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرَ<sup>14</sup> (١٥) قَوَارِيرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ قَدَرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا (١٦)

These utensils will appear to be made of crystal yet its substance will be of silver.

The expression قَدَرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا refers to the fact that the cups and utensils will be made in various shapes and sizes and the attendants of Paradise

11. And as reward for being patient gave them Paradise and robes of silk.

12. They will be reclining in it on thrones and will feel neither the heat of the sun nor the cold of the winters.

13. The shades of the orchards of Paradise will bow down over them and the clusters of their fruits will be within their easy reach.

14. And dishes of silver and goblets of crystal will be passed around them. The crystal will be of silver which they will have very aptly arranged.

will have decorated various shelves with them. The purpose of all this arrangement will be that they are able to provide any set in accordance with time, circumstances and need. The word تَقْدِيرًا encompasses all these meanings, and it is difficult to find a single word to translate all these meanings.

وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا (١٧) عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّى سَلْسَبِيلًا (١٨)<sup>15</sup>

Earlier verses mention the fountain of Kāfūr. These verses mention another fountain called Salsabīl. I have already referred to earlier that they do not reflect their literal meaning. The literal meaning of Zanjabīl is dry ginger; however, names are adopted because of some very minute association with their meaning. There are so many things and objects of Paradise which are mentioned in the Qur'ān; however, we are not able to ascertain the exact nature of these things through their names. It is sufficient for us that the Almighty has informed us of these names. God willing, we will be able to know the exact nature as well. Another name of this fountain is Salsabīl. In the opinion of **Zujāj**, it means is “freely flowing”. It has obviously been named thus because of the flowing nature of the fountain, which is just one of its varied features.

وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُخَلَّدُونَ إِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَنشُورًا (١٩)<sup>16</sup>

Mentioned in this verse are the characteristics of the boys who would attend to the dwellers of Paradise and present goblets and cups to them. There are two reasons that these boys will be graced with eternal youth: Firstly, since these attendants will be young and youthful, they will be very vigilant, efficient and enthusiastic in their service. Secondly, they will always stay the same age due to which they will be forever alert and because of remaining in service to their masters for such a long time they will become aware of their temperament, habits and taste. It may be kept in consideration that efficiency in service depends very much on experience. An old attendant has experience but he loses his vigour for work. A newly employed attendant is very enthusiastic but he lacks experience and style, and as a result can become a cause of bother for his master. In Paradise, both these deficiencies will be covered and the Almighty will provide attendants each and every ability of whose will be eternal.

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15. And they will be given to drink another wine flavoured with the spring of Zanjabīl. This is a spring therein called Salsabīl.

16. And they will be attended by boys who will never grow old. When you see them you will think that they are pearls scattered about.

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The words *رَأَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَنثورًا* mention their beauty, elegance and sophistication as well as them being well-dressed. Whenever one sees them, one will think that they are pearls scattered about.

وَاِذَا رَأَيْتَ تَمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيْمًا وَمُلْكًا كَبِيْرًا (٢٠)<sup>17</sup>

These words do not need any explanation. Each part of Paradise will have blessings and regal splendour for its dwellers.

عَالِيَهُمْ ثِيَابٌ سُنْدُسٌ خُضْرٌ وَاسْتَبْرَقٌ وَحُلُوْا اَسَاوِرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُوْرًا (٢١)<sup>18</sup>

The word *عَالِي* is an adverb of place declined as an accusative of state (*hāl*) and refers to the outer garments of the dwellers of Paradise: robes and coats.

These outer garments will be made from *sundus* and *istabraq* which are the names of famous Persian silk fabrics. Some people have differentiated between the two with regard to their thickness; this research, however, is unnecessary. Here they refer to the *sundus* and *istabraq* of Paradise, whose real form is known to God only. The people of Arabia were more acquainted with Persian and Egyptian cultures; therefore, in order to delineate the blessings of Paradise, most things which belonged to these cultures have been presented before them. In those days, the kings would generally wear robes of *sundus* and *istabraq*. It is obvious that if outer garments are made of such exquisite cloths, their inner garments would be even more soft and elegant. The verses only mention the outer garments, and leaves the reader to analogously deduce what else they shall be wearing.

Consider next the expression: *وَحُلُوْا اَسَاوِرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ* (and they will be made to wear bracelets of silver). The kings of those times used to wear bracelets of gold and silver. Here mention is of bracelets of silver only; however, in Sūrah Kahf, bracelets of gold are also mentioned *يُحَلِّوْنَ فِيْهَا مِنْ* (they shall be decked with bracelets of gold, (18:31)). Sūrah Hajj (22:23) and Sūrah Fāṭir (35:33) also mention this. This would mean that the dwellers of Paradise will be blessed with a variety of jewellery: whenever they desire they will be able to wear gold bracelets and those among them who desire silver ones will also be able to do so. Variety and difference in taste are very natural things. In Paradise, due consideration will be given to each person's taste and choice. The

17. Wherever you look you will see great favours and a grand kingdom.

18. Their outer garments will be of green silk and brocade. And they will be made to wear bracelets of silver. And their Lord will give them pure wine to drink.



following verses of Sūrah Qāf bear witness to this: لَّهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ فِيهَا وَلَدَيْنَا (there they shall have all they desire, and We shall have yet more to give, (50:35)).

This is the interpretation offered by the exegetes; however, my mind also goes towards another aspect: Dwellers of Paradise will enjoy different status, as is evident from Sūrah Wāqī'ah. One category will be that of the *sābiqūn* (the foremost) and the *muqarrabūn* (the near ones) and another category will be of the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* (companions of the right hand). It is but natural that there exist a difference in the sections of Paradise they dwell in and the favours they be blessed with. The Qur'ān has also alluded to this difference; so on the basis of this difference it is possible that the Qur'ān has mentioned silver bracelets at one place and gold ones at another.

There is a point worthy of attention in وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا: In verse five above, the words are: إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا (the loyal, they indeed will drink cups of wine flavoured with camphor). Later, in verse seventeen, it is said: وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا (they will be given to drink another wine flavoured with the spring of Zanjabil) and here it is said: وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا (and their Lord will give them pure wine to drink). Connoisseurs of the language can easily appreciate the subtle difference between the three styles of: يُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا, يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ, and سَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ. The question is: why this difference in style? In my opinion, it signifies that the loyal will gradually come closer to God and at last reach the point when their Lord Himself will make them drink pure wine. We cannot imagine in this world what this pure wine will be like. For this reason, the Qur'ān has not compared it to something we know of the way it has in the case of the fountains of Kāfūr and Salsabīl. Only the Almighty knows what it will be like. At times, I am driven to believe that these words refer to the musk-sealed pure wine which will be reserved for the near ones of God only, and which is referred to with great emphasis in Sūrah Muṭaffifin in the following words:

يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ خَتَامُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ وَمِزَاجُهُ  
مِنْ تَنْسِيمٍ عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (٢٨-٢٥: ٨٦)

Pure wine, sealed shall be given to them to drink; the seal will be of musk. And it is for this thing, those who wish to strive, should strive with enthusiasm. And it will be mixed with *tasnīm*, a special spring on whose banks these favoured ones shall sit and drink. (86:25-28)

إِنَّ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُمْ مَشْكُورًا (٢٢)<sup>19</sup>

The implication of this verse is that after receiving all these blessings, their Almighty will praise them in these words. The righteous will be rewarded because of their own deeds and will not need the efforts and recommendations of others to be given these favours. Concealed in these words is a slant on people who by relying on the intercession of their alleged deities remained indifferent to reward and punishment even though none of them will be of any benefit to them when the time comes.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ تَنْزِيلًا (٢٣) فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تُطِعْ مِنْهُمْ آثِمًا أَوْ كَفُورًا (٢٤)<sup>20</sup>

These verses occur in this *sūrah* with exactly the same purpose and stress as the following verse of Sūrah Qiyāmah: لَا تُحْرَكْ بِهِ لِسَانُكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ: (١٦:٧٥) (to swiftly learn it, do not hastily move your tongue to read it, (75:16)). The purpose and stress is that once the fate of the believers and the disbelievers has been stated, the Prophet (sws) is asked to show patience and to wait for the decree of the Almighty. He should carry out his duties with perseverance and wait for God's judgement. Whatever the Qur'ān is informing these people shall necessarily manifest itself.

The verse إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ تَنْزِيلًا addresses the Prophet (sws) and tells him that he has not authored the Qur'ān and presented it to people nor has he asked God to send it down to him so that it is his responsibility to prove the truths and premises it presents and to make people see the realities it presents. The fact of the matter is that it is the Almighty Who has revealed it to Him in an elaborate and profound manner. One should keep in mind the stress sounded by the words إِنَّا نَحْنُ (It is We). The implication is that when the Almighty has revealed the Qur'ān to the Prophet (sws), he should not worry about the opposition and idle talk of people. It is the responsibility of the Almighty to deal with these people and He is sufficient to do this.

The emphasis sounded by the word تَنْزِيل is that this Qur'ān is not a request put forth by its presenter nor is it something baseless which will disappear into nothingness because of the animosity of people. On the other hand, it has been comprehensively and thoroughly revealed by the Almighty. Every single word of it will come true both in this world and in that to come.

In the section of the verse فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ, the preposition ل after فَاصْبِرْ

19. Indeed, this is a reward of your deeds and your effort has been accepted.

20. We alone have revealed this Qur'ān to you in an elaborate manner. So with perseverance wait for the judgement of your Lord and pay no heed to any sinner or ingrate among them.

shows that the latter word encompasses the meaning of “wait” in it. The implication is that when the Prophet (sws) has not demanded that such a book be sent down to him, why is he worried about the objections and demands of the people; his responsibility, which he should keep on discharging, is only to communicate this Book to them and wait for the judgement of the Almighty; he should not in the least worry about the demand of these wretched and worthless people regarding being shown the punishment that the Qur’ān is warning them of. The word تُطْع here connotes “paying heed”. I have explained this shade of its meaning elsewhere. In Sūrah ‘Alaq, it has been used in this very meaning in the following verse: (كَلَّا لَا تُطْعُهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ (٩٦: ١٩) (do not pay heed to him and bow down in prostration and draw near, (96:19)).

Consider next the words أَثِمًّا أَوْ كَفُورًا. In verse three, occur the words شَاكِر and (إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا: كَفُور and (كَفُورًا). Here أَثِمًّا occurs as an opposite to شَاكِر. The word أَثِمًّا is used for the person who usurps the rights of others. These rights are of two types: rights of God and rights of fellow human beings. The word كَفُورًا is used for the person who usurps the rights of God and the word أَثِمًّا is used for the person who usurps the rights of his fellow human beings. These two attributes are generally inseparable for a person who usurps the rights of his fellow human beings will never be the one who fulfils the rights of the Almighty. However, there are differences in the inclinations and proclivities of people. This malady manifests itself in people in various forms. In some, it produces stinginess, greed and callousness which make them an enemy of virtue. In some others, it produces egotism, selfishness and arrogance which stop them from bowing down before the truth. In the Quryash, we find characters of both these types in the persons of Abū Lahab and Abū Jahal respectively. Keeping both these characters in consideration come the words: وَلَا تُطْع مِنْهُمْ أَثِمًّا أَوْ: كَفُورًا and explain to the Prophet (sws) that his adversaries are of two types: either they are those caught in lust and greed of worldly pleasure and as such have become his enemies or are the ones who have been overcome by egotism which is not letting them acknowledge the truth; both these types of people are not worthy of paying heed to; their malady has no remedy.

وَاذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (٢٥) وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَاسْجُدْ لَهُ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا (٢٦)<sup>21</sup>

The previous verse urges people to be patient. These verses now prescribe the way to be patient. The words “dawn to dusk” are all-

21. And remember the name of your Lord from dawn to dusk and prostrate yourselves before Him in the night and glorify Him till late at night.

encompassing and remembrance is used in the general sense and includes the daily prayers as well as various general utterances for remembering God. The words وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا (and glorify Him till late at night) refer to the *tahajjud* prayer. Details of this prayer are found in preceding *sūrahs* especially Sūrah Muzzammil.

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ يُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ وَيَذَرُونَ وَرَاءَهُمْ يَوْمًا ثَقِيلًا (٢٧)<sup>22</sup>

Here an assurance is sounded to the Prophet (sws) by informing him of the real malady of his opponents: these people are merely trying to cover up the reality by raising doubts on his preaching. Their real malady is that they are slaves to worldly pleasures and do not have the courage to give up these pleasures which are immediate as compared to those of the Hereafter. However hard the Day of Judgement may be, they raise some artificial objections about it in order to conceal their lust for this world. By doing so, they actually want to give the impression to their people that if they are not accepting the Prophet's message, it is not because of stubbornness and selfishness; it is rather because of some genuine reasons.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاهُمْ وَشَدَدْنَا أَسْرَهُمْ وَإِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَا أَمْثَالَهُمْ تَبْدِيلًا (٢٨)<sup>23</sup>

This verse sounds a threat to the Prophet's adversaries as well as answers their greatest objection about the Day of Judgement: their greatest doubt mentioned in the Qur'ān is about the possibility of being recreated when they die and their remains decay into dust. The verse says that the Almighty has created them and He alone has strengthened their joints and muscles. When He has done all this, which they cannot deny, why can't He repeat this act when He wants to? When initial creation was not a bother for Him, how can it become difficult for Him a second time?

The words شَدَّ أَسْرًا mean "to strongly mould joints and tissues together" and the words بَدَّلْنَا أَمْثَالَهُمْ point to the fact that it is in the power of the Almighty to recreate these very joints and tissues they have been given in this world.

إِنَّ هَذِهِ تَذْكِرَةٌ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا (٢٩)<sup>24</sup>

This verse is an expression of God's self-sufficiency: This reminder

22. These people only love this world of immediate benefits and ignore a heavy Day that is to come.

23. We alone created them and strengthened their joints and whenever We intend We will replace them in exactly the same form they are in.

24. This is a reminder. So whoever wishes he should take the path of his Lord.

which is being sounded to them is merely for their own well-being and sympathy. Neither is there any personal benefit for God nor some personal motive for the Prophet (sws) in it. It is on the discretion of people to accept it and adopt the path that leads to God. Otherwise they should get ready to face the consequences this Book is informing them of.

وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (٣٠) يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ  
وَالظَّالِمِينَ أَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٣١)<sup>25</sup>

This is a reference to the established practice of God regarding the urge a person has in embracing faith. I have explained it at various places in this *tafsīr*: All works of the Almighty are based on His knowledge and wisdom. He blesses only that person with the will and urge to seek guidance who uses his higher faculties and values his innate awareness of good and evil to which verses two and three of this *sūrah* refer. As for people who waste these abilities and become blind and deaf, they never receive guidance. For them, the Almighty has prepared Hell. They will be cast into it because they made themselves worthy of this treatment by wronging their souls. God Almighty is knowing and wise. He is never unjust to His servants.

With the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah*'s *tafsīr*. فالحمد لله  
على إحسانه (gratitude be to God for His favour).

Lahore,

13<sup>th</sup> February, 1979 AD

15<sup>th</sup> Rabī 'al-Awwal 1399 AH

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25. And you will not wish until Allah wishes. Indeed, Allah is all-knowing, wise. He admits into His mercy whomever He wishes. And for the wrongdoers, He has prepared a grievous punishment.